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Unwillingly to School

by Pauline Ashwell

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Liz was sure to be an influence; for the protection of Mankind, that young miss had *to be trained!*

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This may look like a movigram of Brownian Movement but no such luck; it is Russet Interplanetary College of Humanities Opening Day, four thousand three hundred twenty-seven other freshers milling around

and me in the middle with a little ticket on my chest says Lee, L. because my given name is something not to mention; they say these kids came from one hundred twenty-four planets just to study at Russel but personally of all points in the known continuum this is the one I would rather be any place But.

Freshers come in all sizes, all colors but a fair number are girls so there is one thing we will be finding in common anyway.

This may come as a surprise, that I am a girl, I mean. My tutor at Prelim School says my speech is feminine as spoken but written down looks like the kind of male character who spits sideways.

I reply that I talk like my Dad he is a character all right, male too but does not spit, if you spent your formative years with a filter in your kisser neither would you.

He says my flair for seeing the functional significance of the minutiae of behavior is obviously what got me chosen for the Cultural Engineering course.

Huh.

I know what got me into that all right I am not so dumb as I look.

You think I flatter myself? Brother, by what goes on I look dumb indeed. Maybe this is because of my hair, curly and pale colored—all right, blond. My eyes are blue as they come which is by no means sky color whatever books say, my skin is pink some places white others when washed and a visitor we had once said I had a rosebud mouth.

I am seven then, I do not hold it against her right away there are no roses where I grew up; when I landed here on Earth I hunt one up to see was it a complment.

Brother.

I find later they come other colors but this one is frostbite mauve, and the shape!

I wish to state here my mouth has two lips like anyone else.

Where I grew up is Excenus 23, how I got hauled off it is due to a string of catastrophes but the name of the biggest is D. J. M’Clare.

Excenus sun is what they call a swarmer, ninty-seven small planet in close orbits plus odd chunks too many to count, Twenty-three is the biggest, gravitation one point oh seven Earth diameter a fraction less, if you ever heard of the place it was because they mine areopagite there. Ninty-four per cent production for sale in the known volume of space comes from mines on Twenty-three; but for that reason to live there at all.

My Dad started as a miner and made his pile, then he took up farming and spent the lot, he has it all back again now.

Areopagite forms only in drydust conditions meaning humidity at ground level near above two and one half per cent rainfall None, hence from this farming on

Excenus is something special, but miners are like other people they have to eat too.

When Dad started there was him and Uncle Charlie and their first year they fed two thousand men, nowadays the planetary population is eleven thousand three hundred twenty and there are seven other farmers, most of them started working for Dad and graduated to farms of their own. Nobody on Excenus eats trucked concentrates now.

Unclue Charlie is Hon as in secretary meaning no real relation. He is an engineer, when Dad met him down on his luck but able and willing to build diggers, harvesters, weathermaker for ten thousand acres out of any junk to hand. Had to be done like that because Excenus Haulage Company, the big company did all the shipping in and out of the planet, sold food concentrates. No competition welcome therefore no shipments seeds, agricultural, machinery, all that, would have been allowed through.

It takes Charlie two years to do his job, meanwhile Dad bones up the agricultural side. Nowadays there

are a lot of books on drydust farming, they cover soilmaking, microbiology, economical use of weather, seed selection, plenty more; at that time there were fewer and Dad read them all.

If he has sent for the usual texts E. H. C. might have caught on and had a little accident in transit, so Dad gets them in as *books*, I mean antique style, chopped in pieces and hinged together down the side. They are labeled Curio Fascimiles and disguised with antique pictuer covers mostly show the damndest females you ever saw, dressed in bits and pieces mostly crooked; some of them dead. People collect these things for some reason. Dad has one or two put on top with texts to match the outside, rest are textbooks on agriculture like I said.

Charlie offers to make reader-reels from them but Dad turns it down. He still has all those books packed in a row, when I was little he used to tell me how he learned all his farming studying that way, without using machines, it just showed you could still do it if you had to. Dad never had any education and it

bothers him; I used to think that was why he kept on telling me this.

Well there are plenty of troubles not least with E. H. C. but Dad is not the type to give up; reason he started farming in the first place was he caught on E. H. C. were making it impossible for anyone to do just that; Dad does not like people who try and stop him even if it was not what he wanted in the first place.

I am born soon after the farm is really set, my mother walked out when I was three. She was fresh out of college with an agricultural degree when he met her, maybe the trouble was Dad caught on she knew less about drydust farming than he did, maybe other things. Excenus 23 is no place for a woman they say.

It is O.K. by me but I was born in the place.

Dad and Charlie raised me between them like the crops, this is to say carefully.

There are plenty more people now in Green Valley where the farms are, thirty or so and they change all

the time. People who come out farm for a bit make their pile then go. We even get women some times. People's wives from Town come out to board sometimes, Dad lets them because he thinks they will Mother me.

Well mostly I manage to steer them off and no hard feelings, it is my home after all they got to be reasonable about if if they want to stay. Seems they do as a rule, Town is kind of tough to live in. Several stayed a year or more. So it is not true to say I grew up in a wholly masculine environment, I knew up to seven women for quite a while.

Green Valley is outside the mining area and about six hundred miles from Town. This has to be, Town gets most of its water combing the air and so do the weathermakers for the farms; anyway mining and farming do not mix so good. The Valley is twenty miles each way hedged by hill ridges up to seventy feet high. Outside is stone flats, dust bowl and tangle-mats of *Gordianus* scrub. Forty miles round about I know it pretty well but the rest of the planet is about the same, except for Town.

This is where I was born. I was all set to stay there till Dad had his accident, first catastrophe on the way to this place.

I am up one day in a helivan watching the harvest on a thousand-acre strip at the edge of the farm, there is a moderate wind blowing from over the hill, so we are keeping the weather-lid over each row until just before the harvester gets there so as to keep the dust out of the grain. I am directing this.

Here at the edge the weather-lid is just above the corn, it runs from the weather-maker in the middle of the farm in a bi cone like a very flat tent, fifty feet high in the middle and four miles across. You cannot see it of course unless the wind blows dust across, or there is rain inside; the lid is just a layer of air polarized to keep dust one side, water vapor the other; just now you can see plainly where puffs of dust go skittering across.

The harvester gets to the end of a row on the far side from the road, I signal Biff Plater at Control and he draws the weather-lid in twenty yards. The harvester

lifts its scanner at the end of the strip, wheels, and comes through the next swathe, with the big cutter pushing six inches above ground, stalks sliding back into the thrasher bagged corn following on the trailer behind.

Then I see Dad come along the road riding the biggest kor on the farm. Kor are *Pseudocamelopus hirsutinaris* part of the indigenous fauna we started taming to ride on about a year ago. Dad does not really enjoy it, he cannot get used to having no brakes but he will not give up.

I see right away he is having trouble, the kor slipped its bridle and navigating on its own, long neck straight out and Dad slipping to and fro in the saddle; his mouth filter is bumped out and waving behind.

The harvester is half up the field. I do not want the kor to be scared I yell to Biff, Turn it off quick! But the controls are the other side of the shack from the weather ones.

Then the kor sees the scanner rearing on its stalk, it is not frightened at all thinks this is the great great grandfather of the species and charges straight across to say hello.

I am yelling to Biff and got my eyes shut, then he is yelling right back, I have to open them and look down.

The kor has gone straight into the second before it stopped. Dad has been thrown and the harvester stopped with one tread a foot from his head and a corner gone over his arm.

I bring the heli down yelling for help on all frequencies.

Dad is breathing but flat out; fractured skull, ulna and radius like a jigsaw puzzle, multiple injuries to the chest; the kor is in three pieces mixed up with the machine.

We call up the hospital in Town and they direct first aid over two-way visiphone while the ambulance

comes. It takes seventy minutes and I am swearing to myself we will hire a permanent doctor if we have to shanghai him, after this.

The ambulance arrives and the doctor says we have done as well as can be expected, fortunately Dad is tough but it will be a two-month hospital job at the least.

They crate him up in splint plastic and load him into the ambulance. Buffalo Cole has packed me a bag, I get in too.

I am out again first thing, passengers not allowed.

I get out the long-distance heli and go straight to Town, I am waiting in the hospital when they arrive. I wait till they have Dad unpacked before I start to inquire.

These hospitals! It is all they will do to let me look at him, when I do he is lying in a kind of tank; his chest is the wrong shape, there is a mass of tubes round his head running to a punk, this is for resorption of blood

clots in the brain; more too the other end for external aeration of the blood, he is not going to use his lungs for a bit.

I think this does not look real, Dad in all this plumbing, then I hear my breathing goes odd, next thing you know the doctors steer me outside.

They say it will be a week before the blood clots go and Dad wakes up but they will report by visiphone every day.

I say No need they can tell me when I visit each day.

They are deaf or something, they repeat they will call Green Valley each morning at thirteen o’clock.

I say Is that when they would prefer me to call in?

At least they have got it, they say Surely I will not fly six hundred miles every day?

I say No I shall be stopping right here in Town.

Then they want to know what friends I am stopping with, I say at a hotel of course.

Consternation all around No place for young girls to stop in this town, they make it out the toughest hellhole in the known volume.

I say Nuts there are hotels for transients and their wives too.

They flap wildly in all directions and offer me a bed in the nurses' hostel which is men only ordinarily but they will make an exception.

I say thanks very much, No.

In the end they tell me to go to the Royal Hotel it is the most respectable of the local dumps, do not on any account go to the Royal Arms which is a pub in the toughest quarter of the town; they tell me how to go.

I put my luggage bag in my pocket; for some reason I have clutched it throughout; and I go.

Way I feel I do not go to the hotel straight off, I walk around a bit. I have been into Town of course shopping with Dad, maybe twice a year, but I do not seem to know it so well as I thought.

Then I find I have got to the Royal Arms or just near it anyway.

It is now late evening the sky is black except for stars, planets, and meteors crashing through every minute or two. The town is lit up but there are a few in the streets, quiet folk are home in another quarter the rest still fueling up indoors. Way I feel is some toughery would suit me fine to take my mind off, because taming kors was my idea in the first place. Maybe I will get a chance to try out that judo kick I learned from Buffalo Cole.

So I slip through the noise-valve doors one after another and go into the pub.

Brother.

The noise trap is efficient all right, outdoors no more than a mutter so there is a real wallop inside. Every idea in my head is knocked clean out of it, even th thought I might go away. Among other things are three juke boxes in three corners going full blast and I cannot hear them at all.

Part of the decibels come from just conversation, part is encouragement to a three-way fight in the middle of the floor. I am still gaping when two of the parties gang up on the third and toss him all the way to the door. I dodge just in time, he rebounds off the inner valve and falls right at my feet.

Everyone turns and sees me, and the juke boxes all become audible at once.

I go down on my knees to see if the character I have just missed meeting is still breathing or not. His pulse is going all right but his face is a poor color wherever blood lets me see, I yell for water but competing with the juke boxes get nowhere. I am taking breath to try again when someone turns them off at the main, silence comes down like cotton-wool.

I ask for water in a whisper, someone brings it and tries to take me away.

I find I am clinging to the guy yelling He is hurt he is hurt! There is blood balling in little drops on my evercleans and smeared over my hands, I am trying to wipe it off with a disposable; not suited to this of course it crushes and goes away to dust and then the cotton wool feeling in my ears spreads elsewhere.

Then I am lying on my back with water running down my chin and a sensation of hush all round.

I try to sit up and something stops me. Someone murmurs soft nothings that fail to make sense.

I keep quiet till I have it sorted and then I figure I have fainted clean away.

Me, Lizzie Lee.

I sit up and find I am on a couch in a sort of backroom and there are faces all round. Half of them seem

knocked out of shape or with knobs on, bashed recently ore previous.

The faces all jostle and I hear they are telling those behind She is sitting up! and the glad news getting passed along.

Someone pushes through the faces carrying a tray with food for six, I deduce they think I fainted from hunger or something.

I would put them right on this when I realize the feeling in my middle is because I last ate ten hours ago.

I weigh in and they appear pleased by this.

So I feel an explanation is owed them and I tell them my Dad is in hospital with an accident, you would not think they could get so upset about a perfect stranger, sure this will not last but it is genuine feeling just now for all that.

There is more buzzing and a kind of rustle and I find they are taking up a collection.

I am horrified, I cry No, no, they are very kind but I truly cannot accept.

And they think this is proper pride or something, they start to mutter again and someone says Well then no need to worry, Knotty will give me a job as long as I need it, won't he? Knotty is in the crowd somewhere, seems he is keeper of this pub. He seems to agree and I figure out he'd better.

I do not see why they are so sure I am indigent until I happen to glance down. I am still in my work evercleans I was wearing when Dad got hurt; also it breaks on me suddenly this is the worst quarter of the town no girl would come here if she could afford to be elsewhere, even then not into the Royal Arms unless full of sweet innocence or something.

And I cannot speak.

When a bunch of strangers are mooning over your problems because you are a poor young thing you cannot tell them you walked in to look for a fight.

Truly, I could swear out loud.

In two shakes of a vibrator they have it fixed, Knotty will give me a job as long as I need one and I can have a room above the pub and at least fifty husky miners have sworn a personal guarantee no one within miles will lift a finger in any way I could not wish.

So what can I do?

I thank them and I walk out into the bar and when I get there I find the laws of human nature are not wholly suspended, there is a fight going on.

My bodyguard behind me gives a concerted roar and the fight stops and they look sheepish at me.

It is so clear that they expect me to look shocked and sorrowful that I cannot help it, this is just what I do.

I ask the cause of the fight and they shuffle and the bigger one says he is very sorry and would like to apologize Miss.

It turns out he has come in since I arrived and wished to get drunk with the minimum delay, the assembled party tell him Damsel in distress back of the bar and he says to hell with that, she is probably faking it anyway; he see this was error and regrets it very much.

And I have to make a production over forgiveness, he will never believe me unless I do.

So I am stuck.

You think all this will wear off in a day or too? Brother, so do I. At first, that is. But it does not. I have reformed the place overnight.

I begin to think getting drunk each night and working it off by fighting are not really their personal choice, all they need is a little stimulus to snap them out of it

such as the influence of a good woman maybe and looks like I am elected.

I get so busy listening to assorted troubles and soothing fights before they come to the boil, apart from any job Knotty can give me such as putting glasses in the washer and dishing the drinks, I hardly have time to think about Dad except at the hospital each day.

He is dead out for seven days just like they said, while the blood clots get loose from his brain; also they set his ribs and arm and tack up things inside. My miner friends all cheer me up they say This is a good hospital and tell me all the times they have been put together again themselves, I say Oh and Ah so often I am quite tired it seems to please them anyway.

Then Dad comes awake.

He does not do it while I am there of course, but I am allowed to sit with him two hours the day after, they have shifted him out of the tank into a proper bed, and taken the plumbing away. Towards the end while

I am there he comes round and says Hello Liz how have you been?

And I want to cry but I am damned if I will, I say, I am fine. And he is already asleep again.

I ring home like I do every day. Charlie is out so I leave a message, then I go back to the pub. I feel truly I could sing all the way, I do not notice until Knotty says so that I am singing anyway. Knotty is in a sour mood but when I tell him about Dad he fetches out half a smile and says will I be leaving them?

I say No Dad has another one month and twenty one days in hospital to go.

At this his face falls under three gravities and he says All very well for me. I say why? can he not afford to pay me?

He says what troubles him is the pub. Since I came liquor drinking is down two fifths, if anybody starts to get drunk the rest stop him in case something occurs

to sully my pure girlish mind, it becomes clear that to Knotty this sobriety is not pleasing at all.

Well it is far from being my wish either, at least I think that at first then I think again Do I really want my pals back to the old routine drunk every night dead drunk Friday to Monday? This do-gooding is insidious stuff.

I go on thinking about it when I have time, this is not often because the boys are so pleased to hear Dad is better they allow each other to get quite lit, I have to head off one row after another.

I begin to think anyway this situation cannot last long, the pressure is building up visibly something is going to blow they need outlets for aggression and getting none just now. Also I must do something for Knotty. I could tell him Dad will pay back his losses but Knotty’s head is solid bone; if I once got into it I am not a dear little down-and-out, he would let it out again at the diagrammatic wrong time.

Things have got to end but they have got to end tidy with no hard feelings, I shall need help for this.

I got out that night as soon as Knotty is in bed and get to a public visiphone. I dial home, never mind it is one in the morning I want Uncle Charlie.

What I get is Buffalo Cole looking sleepy, he lets out the yip he learned from an old stereo and asks where I am and where I have been so long and so loud I cannot tell him for quite a while.

Then he tells me Charlie is here in Town.

He has assumed I am staying at the Hospital. They phoned today as usual, he asked for me and found I was somewhere on my own; he busted into town straight off like a kor calf into a corn field and been hunting for me all over tearing out hair in bunches.

He is staying with a friend the far side of town, I ring.

Brother.

Now he has found me he has no wish to talk to me I am to stay in the visiphone booth and not move till called for well I suppose I can wiggle my ears if I like.

Charlie arrives in a heli four minutes later and mad enough to burn helium, he gives me the kind of character my pals sketch for each other when I am not supposed to be by.

He is not interested in excuses, he will get me out of whatever mess I am in for my father’s sake; I will come to a bad end some day but I can have the grace to keep it till the old man is on his feet again.

I have learned something these last few days, I do not yell back. I say I have been very foolish and I need advice.

Do not think this fools him but he is taken aback slightly. I get something said before he recovers and in the end I tell the whole thing hardly interrupted at all.

At the end he gives me a peculiar look like when one of his hatcharia gave birth to a parrot and says nothing at all.

I say Look Charlie my idea is this; he says Liz your ideas are the start of this trouble in the first place, you have been getting ideas ever since I knew them and every one worse than the one before, just let me think about this.

Then he says Well if you leave without explanations I suppose we will have these desperate characters hunting for you all over Town and if the truth gets out there will be a rumpus because of that, I guess you better go back there for tonight anyway, but how are you going to get back in?

I say I have a key, does he think I crawled out the window? From his look I rather gather he does, Men are children at heart.

All the same I go back quietly and sleep like a tombstone.

In the morning I see Charlie at the hospital and he says he has an idea but seems he prefers to sit on it and see how it will hatch, I do not tell him what I think of this.

Then Dad wakes and says a few words and things look brighter and afterwards Charlie swears he has a real idea how I can get out of this without any hurt feelings, it just needs a but more work on it.

I go back to the Arms thinking my troubles are half over, Brother what error, this is where they begin.

That evening I am chinning to some types who cut up yesterday, I tell them how shocked I am how surprised how sad because they have backslid, they are always sure I feel like this. If I do not say it they get upset because they suppose my feelings too deep for words; I can do this sort of thing no hands now.

Just the same it takes some concentration, when the stranger comes in I hardly notice him at all.

He is a tall chap in the usual evercleans with filter mask over his shoulder, all that is strange is I have not seen him before, men stick to their own pubs as a rule.

He slides into a corner and swaps words with the regulars and I forget him altogether.

The clock strikes twelve, two hours to midnight closing, enter a tall dark stranger.

Short hair and big shoulders and the face that launched the campaign for Great Outdoors Shampoo, maybe twenty-two years old, he takes a quick look round and I guess he does not think much of the place.

Well he should have seen it a week ago, now there is only one single juke box going and people are just chatting over drinks, not a fight in the place.

He comes up to the bar and taps someone on the shoulder to make way; try touching someone a fortnight back and stand well clear! This time the

fellow stops his fist before it goes six inches and then moves over an inch or two and I am face to face with the stranger over the gap.

He looks at me and registers more surprise than I thought his face could hold, I say What are you drinking sir?

He swallows hard and says Beer please; something is displeasing him like mad but I cannot see how it is me.

I give him his beer and he gives me an unloving look and moves away, he horns in on one of the gatherings and starts to chat.

I am busy but I keep an eye on him and it seems to me the chat is getting too emphatic for health, I beckon over a miner called Dogface and ask what goes on.

He says That character been annoying you Liz? I say No is he annoying anyone else? Dogface says he asks

too many damn questions someone will paste him any minute now.

I sign for another miner called Swede; these two are the steadiest around; I say Ride herd on this character and keep him out of trouble.

They say How? I say get into conversation and stop him talking to anyone who is prone to get mad.

They look doubtful so I tell them to talk to him, he is asking questions well tell him answers, tell him about life on Excenus you can see he is a fresh-out Terrie, tell him about mining; that will be instructive for him.

Next time I look Dogface and Swede are one on each side of him talking away, the other types have all drifted off.

The stranger stays for an hour and they stick by him all the while, when he leaves no one has laid a finger on him, I have done a good deed this day. Dogface and Swde say they never knew they had so much to talk

about, just the same the stranger did not look grateful to me.

Next day I go to the hospital as usual wondering if Charlie has hatched his idea.

Halfway there I feel eyes on the back of my neck. I look round and there he is again, the tall dark stranger I mean.

He strides up and says he wants to speak to me.

His tone is such that I think of Buffalo’s judo trick but he looks the type to brush it off with a careless reflex, I could wish there were more people around.

I say What about?

He says I know damned well what about, this is poaching and he will not stand for it, he will complain to something I do not catch.

I say he must be thinking of somebody else.

He sizzles behind his teeth and says I need not think I can get out of it by playing innocent because he will be able to trace me perfectly well. I obviously come from that establishment for muddy minded morons Pananthropic Institute of Social Research; everybody knows Excenus is Russet's field-work place and no other school would crash it, let alone horning in on a practical that way.

Furthermore the dodge I am using was corny in the Ark or earlier.

I am much perplexed but more angry and ask what is he proposing to do?

He says Don't worry I will find out later, I can guess he does not know either; but before I can say so he goes striding away.

I walk on getting madder as I go, this mystery on top of everything else is enough to drive me round the fourth dimension, and he will catch on to his mistake and I shall never hear it explained; however when I

arrive I forget him because Dad is awake and fit for talking to.

Several times I wonder Shall I tell him the whole thing? but he is still sick, this is no time to tell him I am serving in a bar in the toughest part of the town.

We talk quietly about the farm and plans for the next year and things we did when I was little, all of a sudden I want to cry.

Then Charlie comes. One visitor at a time I have to go, Charlie needs some instructions about the farm.

I think I will go out and walk around, I do not like waiting in the hospital they think women belong some other place. I am halfway down the outside steps when there is a shadow over me and a voice says Excuse me, Miss Lee?

I turn and stare.

Brother what is this, are they making a stereo on Excenus, this is the handsomest man I ever came

across. He makes the one this morning look like a credit for twenty all from one mold, I am certain I never saw him before.

He says We met last night though that was hardly an introduction, he is glad of an excuse to make my acquaintance now.

I think No this cannot be, yes it is, this is the gink I hardly noticed last night; same face same voice same hands and I never looked at him twice, how in Space is it done?

Brother, he called me Miss Lee!

I say there must be some mistake and turn toward the hospital again.

He says the hospital clerk told him my name and he saw me come out of the Royal Arms this morning.

Sing Hey for the life of a hunted fawn, now I am good and mad, just crazy. He says he thinks a talk would be mutually profitable, what I think is something quite

different and I say it out loud. He has a way of doing things with his eyebrows to look amused, men have been killed for less.

He says What would the clientele of the Royal Arms think of that?

I say what the hell is that to him?

He says he will be delighted to explain if I will give him the opportunity but this is hardly a suitable place to talk.

There are no suitable places and I tell him so.

He says he has a helicar there, if I would care to drive it anywhere I like he will give me the key.

I begin to see what will happen if this specimen opens his face to Knotty and Co; I must know what his game is; I say O.K.

We are just getting into the heli when the air is sundered, Liz! here is Uncle Charlie and my reputation in pieces again.

He charges across and my companion says, Mr. Blair? which is Charlie’s name though I hardly remember, and he hands over a card which a name and some words on it.

Charlie reads it and looks baffled but not mad any longer.

I sneak a look at it, it says D. J. M’Clare and a string of initials, Russet Interplanetary College of Humanities, Earth, it has Department of Social Engineering in little letters lower down.

Charlie says Liz what in Space are you doing now?

M’Clare says he has to make Miss Lee a rather complicated apology, this being no place to do which he has suggested a ride, it will be much better if Mr. Blair will come along too.

I do not know how it is done but ten seconds later Charlie is inviting him for a drink to the house where he is staying and I am tagging along behind.

The house is close to the hospital and well to do all right the air is humidified right through, I never cared for alcohol much and I am more tired of the smell; when Charlie has done bustling with drinks M’Clare begins.

He says he understands Miss Lee had an encounter this morning with his pupil Douglas Laydon.

I say Great whirling nebulae not the lunatic who called me a poacher? He says Very likely, Laydon came here to do a practical test and finding I had anticipated him was somewhat upset.

He explains that students in Cultural Engineering have a field work test after two years, this one had to make a survey of the principal factors leading to violence and try out short-term methods for abating some in a selected portion of the community on Excenus 23 namely the Royal Arms pub.

M’Clare says Excenus 23 is a very suitable spot for this kind of field work, the social problems stay constant but the population turns over so fast they are not likely to catch on.

Charlie nods to show he gets this, I get it too and start to be angry, not just mad but real angry inside, I say You mean that dumbbell came out here to push people around just for the exercise?

He says field work is an essential part of the course for a Cultural Engineering degree, I say Hell and hokum nobody has any right to interfere with people just for practice, he says Not everybody possesses your natural technique Miss Lee.

I say Look that is different, I was not trying to find out what makes people tick then fiddle with the springs and think I done something clever.

Charlie says Shut Up Liz.

This man does not believe me, well I did not start this one purpose but now I remember all the times I

listened to someone tell me his troubles and thought What a good girl I am to listen to this poor sucker, how wise how clever how well I understand; I do not like thinking this.

Then I find Charlie has started to tell M’Clare the whole thing.

I will say for Charlie he tells it pretty fair, he does understand why I cannot just let my pals find out I have fooled them, whatever he may have said; but why does he want to tell it to this character will not see it at all?

Then he says Well Professor, if I understand what Cultural Engineering stands for this is a problem right in your line, I would very much welcome advice.

M’Clare says nothing and Charlie says it is a very minor matter of course, M’Clare says There he does not agree.

He says if these tough types caught on their their dear little down and out was really rich it would not

stop at personal unpleasantness, the whole relation between the mining and farming communities might well be upset.

I would like to sneer but cannot because it is perfectly true, Dad is pretty rich and has a big effect on local affairs; if the miners think his daughter been slumming around making fools of them no knowing what comes after.

M’Clare says However it should be easy enough to fix things so no one can catch on.

Charlie says it is not so simple, Liz has to be got away where no one will chase after her; fortunately very few people in Town are in a position to recognize her, but where can she go now.

I say Look that is easy give me a job on the farm.

Charlie says Suppose they take a fancy to visit you, you think Buffalo Cole is going to remember you are the hired help came here last Tuesday? That is the

one place you can be certain someone will give you away.

Besides just as present they know your name but have not connected it with Farmer Lee. No, Liz we have to get you a job as companion or something to someone here in Town, a respectable woman the miners will keep right away from.

I say Charlie there are maybe three respectable women in Town; if you park me on one all my pals will come round to make sure I have not hired into a brothel by mistake. How will your lady friend care for that? Charlie says What worries him is where to find a woman anyone could believe had voluntarily saddled herself with a hellcat like me.

M’Clare makes a little cough and Charlie says What does he think?

M’Clare says our solutions are too prosaic and too partial, this is a classic example of the fauntleroy situation and should be worked out as such.

I say What the hell is a fauntleroy?

He says this means a situation in which one younger and apparently weaker person exerts influence over a group of adults by appealing to their protective instincts.

Appeal hell! he says Unintentionally, no doubt. He says the situation can only be properly resolved if the subject appears to be in no further need of protection against the trouble, whatever it may be, in this case financial.

Charlie says You mean we should tell them Liz has come into money and moved to a hotel?

M’Clare says that again would be only a partial solution, he thinks it would be better if Little Orphan Liz and her sick father were rescued by a Rich Uncle arriving next Wednesday from Earth.

Charlie says Why is Liz short of money if she has a rich uncle ready to assist? M’Clare says he is also a long-lost uncle only recently made his pile and just

managed to trace the one remaining relative he has looked for ever since.

I say Why is this better than, he died and left me the cash? He says Money for nothing morally unsatisfactory and a bad ending, this way you give something in return; also your lonely uncle can take you and your father straight off to Earth and leave nothing for anyone to ask questions about.

I do not believe anyone will swallow this hunk of cereal, too convenient all round.

According to M’Clare that does not matter, it is the right kind of improbably event for this situation. My pals will think it quite right and proper for their little ray of sunshine to be snatched up into unearned affluence and cheer the declining years of her rich relative and bring him together with his estranged brother-in-law; right ending to the situation Statistical probability irrelevant to the workings of Destiny.

Charlie says Where will we find an uncle? He himself is too well known, to hire an actor means going off the

planet. M’Clare says as it happens he has to leave the planet this afternoon and will be returning next Wednesday himself.

Charlie says You mean you’d do it? That’s really wonderful what do you say Liz? What I want to say is, I will not have this cultural corkscrew add himself to my family, but the lemonade tangles in my epiglottis; people have died that way but Do they care?

M’Clare says of course he must get Mr. Lee’s permission for this masquerade, I just thought of that one now I am left with nothing to say except Hellanhokum I ought to be back at the bar.

I do not trust M’Clare one angstrom I could see he was thinking of something else this whole time, probably What interesting opportunities for field work if the whole thing got given away; if Dad is really over his concussion he will put a stopper on the whole thing.

Does he hell!

Charlie takes M’Clare along, never mind visiting hours are over, they spill the whole thing to Dad before the professor catches his ship.

Well I will say they made a job of it. When I go along in the morning absolutely no bites in the furniture, Dad is still weakened of course.

He says Liz, girl, you are as crazy as a kor-calf, you got as much sense as a shortened servo, the moment I take my eyes off you you stir up more trouble than a barrel of hootch on a dry planet. It is a long time since I was surprised at anything you do; here he goes off into ancient history that is not relevant to this affair.

This business, he says, has put the triple tungsten-plated tin top on it, even you must know what could have happened to you going into a place like that, Liz girl how could you do such a thing?

I say Dad I know it was crazy but you have it all wrong, miners may be tough but those types were real good to me.

He says Liz your capacity to fall on your feet is what scares me the worst of all, one of these days the probabilities will catch up with you all in one go. Look at this Professor M'Clare probably the one man in the Universe would know how to get you out of this with no-one catching on, and he turns up here and now.

Well I was all set to get out myself with Charlie helping, but it seems to soothe Dad to think about M'Clare so I let him. That smoothy put himself over all right.

It develops where he has gone is Magnus 9 in the next system to let an examinee loose on some suckers there; he has left a list of instructions with Charlie, and Dad says I am to order myself according to these and not dare to breathe unless so directed.

They are all about what I am to do and say, Charlie stands over me while I learn them by heart, he does not seem to trust me but Hellanall does he think I want to fluff in the middle of a script like this?

Tuesday evening is when the scene starts, my pals ask What is on my mind they hope my old man is not worse is he?

I say I have had a message from a ship just coming within communicator distance and is landing tomorrow. I am to meet someone, whose name got scrambled, at the Space Gate at five thirty a.m.; I cannot think who this can be and it worries me a little Dad has so many troubles already.

At this my pals look grim and say If it is debts I can count on them and if it is anything else I can still count on them, I feel ashamed again.

Five thirty is a horrible time to start. I am yawning and chilled through, the night breeze is still up and dust creeping in among the long pylon shadows in little puffed whirlwinds; the three ships down on the field got their hatches down and goods stacked round and look broken and untidy.

First a little black dot in the sky then bigger and bigger covering more and more stars, it does not

seem to come nearer but only to spread, then suddenly a great bulging thing with light modeling its under side and right over head, I want to duck.

It swings across a little to the nearst pylons. They jerk and the arms come up with a clang, reaching after the ship. There is a flash and bang as they make contact just under the gallery where it bulges, then a long slow glide as they fold and she comes down into place like a grasshopper folding its legs.

I find my breath hitched up, I take a deep lungful of cold morning dust and start coughing.

My pals rally around and pat me on the back.

I thought there were only three present but there seem to be more, I cannot see the passengers get off until half are into the Gate, M’clare is not in sight hell did he not see me perhaps he has ditched me.

They speaker system make with a crack like splitting rocks and says Will Miss Lee believed to be

somewhere around the Gate come to the manager’s office at once please?

I take another deep breath more carefully.

My pals seem to think it is sinister, I now have seven on the premises and they wish to come too. In the end they elect Swede and Dogface bodyguards and the rest wait outside.

I cannot remember one single word I ought to say.

In the office is a man in uniform and another one not, I guess I look blank but not as blank as I feel the human face could hardly, how has he done it this time?

It was several seconds before I recognized him at all. He looks older and kind of worn you would guess he had a hardish life and certainly not cultured at all.

I say I was called for, my name is Lee.

He says slowly, Yes, he thinks he would have known me, I am very like my mother, and he calls me Elizabeth.

Every word is clean out of my head, fortunately my pals take over and wish to know how come?

M’Clare looks at them with a frown and says neither of them is James Lee, surely?

I say No they are friends of mine, does he mean he is my mother’s brother because I thought he was dead?

This is not the right place for that the script is gone to Coalsack already.

M’Clare says Yes he really is John M’Clare, he brings out papers to prove it. My friends give them the once over several times and seem to be satisfied, then they want to know sternly Why had he not helped us before?

M’Clare brings out letters from a tracing firm that cover two years and a bit, I will say he is a worker he

has vamped all this stuff in three days with other things to do, I suppose Cultural Engineering calls for forgery once in a while.

My pals seem satisfied.

I say Why was he looking for us seeing he and Dad never got along? This is the script as originally laid down.

M’Clare alters the next bit ad lib and I don’t take it in but it goes over with my pals all right, they tell him all about Dad’s accident which they think happened prospecting, and about me and the bar; just then in comes M’Clares acquaintance well to do in business locally meaning Uncle Charlie, apologizing for being late though M’Clare told him how late to be.

My pals shuffle and say Well Miss Lee you will not want us now.

I say what is this Miss Lee stuff you have been calling me Lizzie for weeks. I had to tell them my name or they will call Bubbles or something.

M’Clare says he has a great deal to discuss with his niece and Dad, not to mention Charlie, but he wants to hear all my doings and I will want to tell all my friends; maybe if he calls around to the Royal Arms in the evening they will be there?

They shuffle but seem gratified, they go.

Charlie sits down and the manager goes and Charlie says *Whew!* I sit down and do not say anything at all.

Well Knotty will be pleased to get rid of me that is one life brightened anyway.

I do not want another day like that one, six hours doing nothing in a hotel. I see Dad about five minutes, he uses up the rest of the visitor’s time with M’Clare or Charlie in and me out, then Charlie flies back home to get something or other and I want to go too, I want to go home! I will never come to this town again, I can’t anyway until my pals have all left the planet. I wish all this lying were over.

Evening M’Clare and I go out to the bar.

Knotty had a letter from me all about it and of course everyone knows, minute we get inside the door I see everybody is worked up and ready to fight at the drop of a hint, fauntleroy situation or not if they think my rich uncle is trying to snoot them all the trouble missed during the last fortnight will occur at one go.

Then M’Clare spots Dogface and Swede at the back of the crowd and says Hello, five minutes later it is drinks all round and everything Joblock smooth, I could not have done it better myself.

Then he is making a speech.

It is all about Kindness to dumb creatures meaning me, I do not listen but watch the faces, judging by them he is doing good. I hear the last words something about Now he has found his niece and her father he does not want to lose sight of them and his brother-in-law has consented the whole family goes back to Earth in two days’ time.

It occurs to me suddenly How am I going to get off the ship? They have found some sick cuss wants to

get to Earth and will play my Dad ten minutes to get a free passage, but my pals are bound to turn up to see me off how am I to slip away?

Then I stop thinking because Dogface says slowly So this is the end, hey Liz?

And someone else says Well it was good while it lasted.

And I cry, I put my head down on the table among the drinks and cry like hell, because I am deceitful and they are kind to me and I wish I could tell the truth for a change.

Someone pats me on the back and shoves a disposable into my hand, I think it is one of my pals till I smell it; nobody bought this on Excenus! I am so surprised I wad it up and it goes to dust so I have to stop crying right away.

I even manage to say Good-by and I will never forget them. They say they will never forget me.

We say about ten thousand goodbyes and go.

Next day the hospital say Dad overtired, they have sedated him, seems he was half the night talking to M’Clare and Charlie what the hell were they thinking of to let him? My uncle will call for me. I expect Charlie what I get is M’Clare.

We are to go shopping buying some clothes for me to wear on Earth, it seems to me this is carrying realism too far but I do not want any more time in the hotel with nothing to do.

Fortunately the tailoring clerk does not know me, we have a machine out at the farm; he takes a matrix and slaps up about ten suits and dresses; they will be no use here at all, no place for condensers or canteen I cannot even give them away.

However I am not bothered so much about that, M’Clare is all the time trying to get me to talk, he says for instance Have I ever thought about going to College? I say Sure, I count my blessings now and then.

We are somehow on the topic of education and what teaching have I had so far? I say Usual machines and reels, I want to get off this so I start to talk about Excenus he cannot compete there. I tell him about our manners, customs, morals, finance, farming, geography, geology, mining of areopagite, I am instructive right back to the hotel I hope now he has had enough of it.

In the evening they let me see Dad.

They say You really ought not to be allowed in he has had his quota of visitors today already, I say Who? But need I ask, it was Mr. M’Clare.

The nurse says I am allowed to see Dad because he refuses to go to sleep until he has told me something, but I must be careful not to argue it will retard his recovery if he gets excited again.

Dad is dead white and breathing noisy but full of spirit, the nurse says You may have five minutes and Dad says No-one is rationing his time for him when he is ready he will ring. The nurse is a sturdy six-footer

and Dad is five foot four, they glare it out. Dad wins in the end.

Well I intend to keep it down to five minutes myself, I say Hello Dad what cooks?

He says Lizzie girl what do you think of this M’Clare?

I think quite a number of things but I say He is very clever, I think.

Dad says Sure he is clever, Professor at a big college on Earth gets students from all the planets in the known volume, I been talking to him and he says you have a flair.

I say Huh?

Dad says I have a flair for this cultural engineering business, Professor M’Clare told him so.

I say Well I promised you already I will keep it under control in future.

Dad starts to go red and I say Look two minutes gone already, what did you want to tell me? say it straight, and he says Going to send you to college, girl.

I say What!

Dad says Liz, Excenus is no place for a young girl all her life. Time you seen some other worlds and I cannot leave the farm and got no one have an eye to you, now M’Clare says he will get you into this College and that is just what I need.

I say But—!

Dad says They got schools on Earth for kids like you, been on an outback planet or education restricted other ways, they are called Prelim schools; well you got the Rudiments already; M’Clare says after three months Prelim you should be fit to get into Russet College of Humanities, he will act as your official guardian while on Earth. Do not argue with me Liz!

The nurse comes back and says I must go in thirty seconds not more, Dad is gray in the face and looks fit

to come to pieces, I say All right Dad of course you know best.

He says Kiss me Lizzie, and good-by.

Then the nurse chases me Out.

This is M’Clare’s doing playing on Dad when he is mixed in the head, he knows damned well this thing is impossible if he were only in his right mind. I go tearing back to the hotel to look for M’Clare.

I find he is out.

I sit there seething one four twenty-seven minutes until he comes in. I say I have to speak to him right now.

I do not know if he is looking bored or amused but it is an expression that should be wiped off with a rag, he says Certainly, can it wait till we reach his room?

We get there and I say Look what is this nonsense you have talked Dad into about taking me to some college

on Earth or something? Because it is straight out crazy and if Dad were right in the head he would know.

M’Clare sits down and says, “Really, Lysistrata, what a spoiled young woman you are.”

Who the hell told him, that name is the one thing I really do hold against Dad.

M’Clare goes on that he did not understand at first why my father refused to have me told about the scheme until it was all fixed, but he evidently knew the best way to avoid a lot of fuss.

I say I am not going to leave Excenus.

M’Clare says I cannot possibly avoid leaving Excenus I have got to go on the ship tomorrow haven’t I?

I say then they can send me back by lifeship, he says it is far too late to arrange that now.

He says he officially my guardian from the moment we leave the planet and he cannot allow me to travel alone, reason for all this rush is so he can see me to College himself, What is the matter with me don't I want to see the World anyway?

Sure, some time, but I don't have to go to College for that.

M'Clare says that is my mistake, Earth had such a rush of sight-seers from the Out Planets entrance not permitted any more except on business, only way I can get there is as a student except I might marry an Earthman some day. I say Hell I would rather go to College than that.

Just the same when I have had enough of it I am coming straight back home.

M'Clare says I will do no such thing.

Great whirling nebulae he cannot keep me on Earth if I want to go!he says Pn the contrary he has no power to do anything else, my father appointed him my

guardian on condition I was to do a four-year course at Russet. Of course if I am determined to return to Excenus home and Dad rather than make the effort to adjust myself to an environment where I have not got everyone secretly under my thumb there is an easy way out, I have to take a Prelim test in three months and if I fail to make it no power on Earth could get me into Russet, and he would have to send me back home.

We have to start early in the morning so Good night.

I go to my room, if there was anything I could bite holes in that is what I would do.

I will pass that exam if it takes twenty-eight hours a day, no this is to be on Earth well all the time that they have; I will get into M’Clane’s class and make him Sorry he interfered with me.

What does he think I am? Dad too, he would have sent me to school long ago except we both knew I would never make the grade.

I am the next thing to illiterate, that’s why.

Oh, I can read in a way, I can pick up one word after another as they come up in the machine, but I cannot use it right; Dad is the same.

Dad used to think it was because he learned to use it too late, then when I was old enough to learn he found I was the same, some kink in the genes I suppose. Both of us, we cannot read with the machine any faster than an old-style book.

I did not know this was wrong until I was eleven. Dad hid the booklet came with the machine then one day I found it, part of it says like this:

“It has sometimes been suggested that the reading rate should be used as a measure of general intelligence. This is fallacious. The rate at which information can be absorbed, and therfore the rate at which words move across the viewer, is broadly correlated with some aspects of intelligence, but not with all. Mathematicians of genius tend to read slower than average, and so do some creative artists.

All that can safely be said that people of normal intelligence have reading rates somewhere above five thousand and that it is exceptional for anyone to pass the ten thousand mark; the few who do are usually people of genius in a narrowly specialized field."

My reading rate is so low the dial does not show, I work out with a stop watch it is eight hundred or thereabouts.

I go and ask Dad; it is the first time he let me see him feeling bad, it is all he can do to talk about it all all, he keeps telling me it is not so bad really he got on all right and he cannot read properly any more than me; he shows me those old books of his all over again.

After this we do not talk about it and I do not want to talk about it now. Not to anyone at all.

That is the longest night I remember in my life, nineteen years of it.

In the morning we got to the Gate. My pals are there seeing me off, I do not cry because I have just found

something makes me so mad I am just waiting to get in the ship and say what I think to M’Clare.

Then we go into the ship.

I cannot say anything now we have to strap in for takeoff. The feeling is like being in a swing stopped at the top of its beat. I cannot help waiting for it to come down, but after a bit I grasp we are up to stay and get unhitched.

In the corridor is a crewman, he says Hello miss not sick? I say Ought I to be?

He asks am I an old traveler? When I say First time up he makes clicking noises like I am clever or lucky or both.

We are getting acquainted when I feel eyes on my backbone and there is M’Clare.

M’Clare says Hello, Lizzie, not sick?

I say I do not have to pretend he is my uncle any more and I prefer to be called Miss Lee, I will not have a person like him calling me Lizzie or in fact anything else, as of now we are not speaking any more.

He raises an eyebrow and says Dear him. I start to go but he hooks a hand round my arm and says What is all this about?

I say I have been talking to that poor sucker come out of hospital and pretending to be my Dad. He is a heart case and thinks he will be cured when he gets to Earth able to get around like anyone else, I know if he could be cured on Earth he could be cured on Excenus just as well, he will simply have to go on lying in bed and not even anyone he knows around, it is the dirtiest trick I ever knew.

Well he is not smiling now any way.

He asks have I told the man he will not be cured I say What does he take me for?

He says I could answer that but I won’t. You are quite right in thinking that it would do very little good to take a man with a diseased heart to Earth, but as it happens he will not be going there at all.

Close to Earth, M’Clare goes on, there is a body on the Moon with approximately one-eighth the gravitational pull, there is a big sanatorium on it for men like this one, the rare case not curable by operation or drugs: and if he cannot live a quite normal life he will at least be able to get out of bed and probably some sort of job, this has been explained to him and he seems to think it good enough.

Sweet spirits of sawdust I have heard of that sanatorium before, why does the deck not open and swallow me up.

I say I am sorry, M’Clare says Why?

I say I am sorry I spoke without making sure of the facts.

I do not beg his pardon because I would not have it on a plate.

M’Clare says my uncle gave him a letter to deliver to me when the ship was under way, he shoves it in my hand and goes away.

It is written with Dad’s styler, he fell on it during the accident and the L went wobbly, what it says is this.

—

Dear Liz,

About this college, I know you said I know best but did not mean it at all, just the same I reckon I do. You got to look at it another way. When they got the readers out at my old school and found I could not use them they reckoned I was no good for learning, but they were wrong. There is more to being educated than just books or you could sit and read them at home.

You and I are handicapped same way so we have to use our heads to get over it. All that is in books came out of somebody’s head, well you and I just got to use our own instead of other people’s. Of course there is facts but a lot of books use the same facts over and over, I found that when I started to study.

There is another thing for you, they told me at school I would never be any good for studying but I reckon I did all right.

It is high time you saw some other worlds than this one but I would not send you to College if I did not think you could get through. M’Clare says you have this Flair. We will look forward to seeing you for years from now, don’t forget to write. Your loving father, J. X. Lee. PS. I got a list of books you will want for Prelim School and Charlie had Information Store copy them, they are in your cabin.

J. X. Lee.

—

Poor old Dad.

Well I suppose I better give it a try, and what's more I better get on with it.

There are reels in my cabin, a whole box of them it will take me a year to get through, the sooner the quicker I suppose.

I jam one in and sit down in the machine put on the blinkers and turn the switch.

There is the usual warmup, the words slide on slow at first then quicker then the thing goes *click* and settles down, the lines glide across just fast enough to keep pace with my eyes. I have picked myself something on Terrestrial Biology and Evoluion, I realize suddenly I will be among it in a couple of weeks, lions and elephants and kangaroos; well I cannot stop to think now I have to beat that exam.

Most of those weeks I study like a drain.

They have cut day-length in the ship to twenty-four hours already, I have difficulty sleeping at first but I adjust in the end. Between readings I mooch round and talk to the crew, I am careful not to be the little ray of sunshine but we get on all right. I go and see the man with the sick heart a few times, he wants to know all about the Moon so I read up and relay as well as I can.

It sounds dull to me but compared to lying in bed I can see it is high-voltage thrill.

He thanks me every day for the whole voyage, I keep saying we only did it because we wanted someone to impersonate Dad. I think there ought to be ways for people like him to get enough money to go to the Moon how can you earn it lying in bed? he agrees with this but does not get ideas very much. I think I will write about it to Dad.

We stop at the Moon to put him down but no time to look round, M’Clare had to be back at Russett day before yesterday, I suppose he lost time picking me up; well I did not ask him to.

Dropping to Earth I am allowed maybe half a second in the control-room to look at the screen, I say What is all that white stuff? they say It is raining down there.

More than half of what I see is water and more coming down!

When the Earthbound ask what interests me most on Earth I say All that water and nothing to pay; they do not know what it means getting water out of near-dry air, condensing breath out of doors, humidity suit to save sweat on a long haul: first time on Earth I go for a walk I get thirsty and nearly panic, on Excenus that would mean canteen given out rush fast for the nearest house.

They told me it was raining; all the same when we walk out of the ship I think at first they are washing the field from up above, I stand there with my mouth open to see; fortunately M’Clare is not looking and I come to quite soon.

Seems all this water has drawbacks too, round here they have to carry rainproofing instead of canteens.

I spend three days seeing sights and never turn on a book.

Prelim school.

Worst is, I do not have a reader of my own now, only reading rooms and I have to keep it private that I read more than two hours a day or someone will catch on and I will be Out before I have a chance to try if what Dad says will work out.

There is more to teaching than books for one thing Class Debates, these are new to me of course but so they are to the others and these I can take. Man to man with my tutor at least I can make him laugh, he says The rugged unpunctuated simplicity of my style of writing is not suited to academic topics even when leavened with polysyllables end of quote, but it is all these books are getting me down.

In the end I get a system, I read the longest reel on each topic and then the other one the author doesn’t like, that way I get both sides to the question.

Three months and the exam; afterwards I keep remembering all the things I should have said till I take a twenty-four hour pill and go to bed till the marking is over.

I wake up and comes a little blue ticket to say I am Through, please report to Russett College in three days for term to begin.

Well, what am I grinning about?

All this means is four years more of the same and M’Clare too added on.

It comes to me as a notion I may not get through Russett term without telling M’Clare all about himself, so I get round and see as much of Earth as I can; more variety than at home.

So then three days are up and here I am in Russett entrance hall with more people than I ever saw in my life at one time.

These are the speaker mechs which are such a feature of Terrestrial life all around the room. One starts up in the usual muted roar like a spacer at a funeral, it says All students for Cultural Engineering Year One gather round please.

This means me.

Cultural Engineering is not a big department, only fifty of us coagulated round this mech but like I said they come in all kinds, there is one I see projecting above the throng so brunet he is nearly purple, not just the hair but all over. What is the matter with him looks like the longest streak of sorrow I ever did see.

Well there are other ways to get pushed into this place than through basic urges thalamic or otherwise, just look at me.

The mech starts again and we are all hanging on what drops from its diaphragm, it says we are to File along corridor G to Room 31 alpha and there take the desk allotted by the monitor and no other.

This we do; even by Terrie standards it is a long hike for indoors.

I wonder what is a monitor, one of those mechs without which the Earthbound cannot tell which way is tomorrow? Then we are stopped and sounds of argument float back from ahead.

That settles it, Terries do not argue with mechs and I am conditioned already, it is a way to get no place at all; there is someone human dealing with the line.

We go forward in little jerks till I can hear, it is one of those Terrie voices always sound like they are done on purpose to me.

We came round the corner to a door and I can see this Monitor is indeed human or at least so classified.

Here we go, it is only me this could happen to.

Each person says a name and the monitor repeats it to the kind of box he carries and this lights up with figures on it. I wonder why the box needs a human along and then I remember, one hundred twenty four different planets and accidents to match, I guess this is one point where Man can be a real help to Machine.

I am glad I saw him before he saw me: I tell him Lee, L. and he looks at me in a bored way and then does a double take and drops the thing.

I pick it up and say Lee, L. in cultivated tones, it lights up just the same, Q8 which means the desk where I have to sit.

The desks are in pairs. When I track Q8 to its lair Q7 is empty, I sit and wonder what the gremlins will send me by way of partner.

I do not wait long. Here she comes, tall and dark and looksl ike she had brains right down her spinal

column, she will have one of those done-on-purpose voices in which I will hear much good advice when the ice breaks in a month or so. Brother this is no place for me.

She looks straight past my shoulder and does not utter while she is sitting down.

I cannot see her badge which is on the other side. She has what looks to me like a genuine imitation kor-hide pouch and is taking styler and block out of it, then she looks at me sideways and suddenly lights all over with a grin like Uncle Charlie's saying as follows, "Why, are you Lizzie Lee?"

I do not switch reactions fast enough, I hear my voice say coldly that my name is Lee, certainly.

She looks like she stubbed her toe. I realize suddenly she is just a kid, maybe a year younger than I am, and feeling sky. I say quick that I make people call me Lizzie because my real name is too awful to mention.

She lights up again and says So is hers, let us found a society for the Prevention of Parents or something.

Her brooch says B Laydon, she says her first name will not even abbreviate so people here get to call her just B.

I am just round to wondering where she heard my name when she says That stuffed singlet in the doorway is of course her big brother Douglas and she has been wanting to meet me ever since.

Here Big Brother Douglas puts the box under his arm and fades gently away, the big doors behind the rostrum slide open and the clock turns to fourteen hours and Drums and Trumpets here comes Mr. M’Clare.

B Laydon whispers I think Professor M’Clare is wonderful do not you?

Brother.

I know M’Clare is going to deliver the Opening Address of the Year to Cultural Engineering students, it is my guess all such come out of the same can so I take time off for some thought.

Mostly I am trying to decide what to do. Prelim school was tough enough, so this will be tough^2, is it worth going through just to show M’Clare I can do it?

Sure it is but can I?

I go on thinking these lines, such as what Dad will say if I want to give it up; I just about decided all I can do is wait and see when suddenly it is Time up, clock shows 15.00 hours exactly just as the last word is spoken and Exit M’Clare.

Some thing I will say.

I look round and all the faces suggest I should maybe have listened after all.

B Laydon is wrapt like a parcel or something, then she catches me looking at her and wriggles slightly.

She says We have been allotted rooms together, sharing a study, do I mind it?

I assume this is because we come together in the alphabet and say Why should I?

She says Well. On the form it said Put down anyone you should like to room with and she wrote Miss Lee.

I ask did she do this because mine was the only name she knew or does she always do the opposite of what Big Brother Douglas tells her, she answers Both.

O.K. by me anyway.

Our rooms are halfway up the center tower, when we find them first thing I see is a little ticket in the delivery slot says Miss Lee call on Professor M’Clare at fifteen thirty please.

Guardian or no I have seen him not more than twice since landing which means not more than twice too often; still I go along ready to be polite.

He lets me sit opposite and looks thoughtful in a way I do not care for.

He says “Well, Miss Lee, you passed your qualifying exam.”

I say Yes because this is true.

He says, it was a very economical performance exceeding the minimum level by two marks exactly.

Hells bells I did not know that, marks are not published, but I swallow hard and try to look as though I meant it that way.

M’Clare says the Admission Board are reluctant to take students who come so close to the borderline but they decided after some hesitation to accept me, as my Prelim Tutor considered that once I settled down as a student and made up my mind to do a little work I should get up to standard easily enough.

He says However from now on it is up to me, I will be examined on this term’s work in twelve weeks’ time

and am expected to get at least ten per cent above pass level which cannot be done by neglecting most of the work set, from now on there are no textbooks to rely on.

He presents these facts for my consideration. Good afternoon.

I swagger out feeling lower than sea level.

It is no use feeling sore, I took a lot of trouble to hide the fact that I did a lot of work for that exam, but I feel sore just the same.

The thing I want to do most is get one hundred percent marks in everything just to show him, I got a feeling this is exactly how he meant me to react, because the more I think about it the more sure I am very few things happen by accident around M’Clare.

Take rooming, for instance.

I find very quickly that most people taking Cultural Engineering have not got the partners they put in for,

this makes me wonder why B got what she wanted, meaning me.

Naturally the first thing I think of is she has been elected Good Influence, this makes me pretty cagey of course but after a day or two I see I must think again.

B always says she does not *look* for trouble. This may be true, she is very absent-minded and at first I get the idea she just gets into a scrape through having her mind on something else at the time, but later I find she has Principals and these are at the back of it.

First time I hear about these is three nights after Opening, there is a knock at my bedroom window at maybe three hours. I am not properly awake and do not think to question how somebody can be there, seeing it is five hundred feet up the tower; I open the window and B falls inside.

I am just about ready to conclude I must be dreaming when B unstraps a small antigrav pack, mountaineering type, and says Somebody offered her

the beastly thing as a secondhand bargain, she has been trying it out and it doesn’t work.

Of course an antigrav cannot fail altogether. If the space-warp section could break down they would not be used for building the way they are. What has gone wrong is the phase-tuning arrangement and the thing can be either right on or right off but nothing in between.

B says she stepped off the top of the tower maybe an hour ago and got stuck straight away. She stepped a little too hard and got out of reach of the tower parapet. She only picked that night for it because there was no wind, so she had no chance of being blown back again. She just had to turn the antigrav off, a snatch at a tie, and drop little by little until the slope of the tower caught up with her. Then she went on turning it snap on and snap off and kind of slithering down the stonework until she got to about the right floor, and then she had to claw halfway round the building.

B says she was just going to tap at the window above mine and then she saw that frightful Neo-Pueblo statue Old Groucho is so proud of, then she came one farther down and found me but I certainly take plenty of waking.

Well I am wide awake now and I speak to her severely.

I say it is her career, her neck, neither of them mine, but she knows as well as I do that jumping off the tower is the one thing in this University is utterly forbidden and no Ifs.

B says That’s just because some idiots tried to jump in a high wind and got blown into the stonework.

I say Be that as it may if she had waked up Old Groucho — Professor of Interpenetration Mechanics ninety last week — she would have been expelled straight away, I add further she knows best if it would be worth it.

B says she is a practicing Pragmatist.

This turns out to mean she belongs to a bunch who say Rules are made mostly for conditions that exist only a little bit of the time, e.g. this one about the tower, B is quite right that it is not dangerous except in a high wind — not if you have an antigrav I mean.

B says Pragmatists lead a Full Life because they have to make up their own minds when rules really apply and act accordingly, she says you do not lead a Full Life if you obey a lot of regulations when they are not necessary and it is a Principal of Pragmatism not to do this.

B says further it is because Terries go on and on about obeying regulations unnecessarily that Outsiders think they are Sissy.

I say Huh?

B says it is not her fault she never had any proper adventures.

I remark If her idea of an adventure is to get hauled in front of the Dean why did she not go ahead and wake up Old Groucho instead of me?

B says the adventure is just taking the risk, everybody ought to take some risks now and then and breaking rules is the only one available just now.

This causes me to gawp quite a bit, because Earth seems to me maybe fifteen times as dangerous as any planet I heard of so far.

There are risks on all planets, but mostly life is organized to avoid them. Like back home, the big risk is to get caught without water; there is only about one chance in one thousand for that to happen, but everybody wears humidity suits just the same.

On Earth you get a sample of about all the risks there are, mountains and deserts and floods and the sea and wild animals and poisons, now it occurs to me Terries could get rid of most of them if they really cared to try, but their idea of a nice vacation is to take as many as possible just for fun.

Well later on it occurs to me I should never have understood this about Terries but for talking to B, and I look round and find a lot of the Terries got paired up with Outsiders for roomates and maybe this is why.

I say to B some of what I think about risks and it cheers her up for a moment, but she goes on getting into trouble on Pragmatic Principals just the same.

Me, I am in trouble too but not on principal.

The work at first turned out not so bad as I expected, which is not to say it was good.

Each week we have a different Director of Studies and we study a different Topic, with lectures and stereos and visits to museums and of course we read Books.

Further we have what are called Class Debates, kind of an argument with only one person speaking at a time and the Director to referee.

Terries say this last is kid stuff, the Outsiders met it mostly in Prelim School if then so they really study hard so as to do good. Next thing you know the Terries are outclassed and trying hard to catch up, so a strenuous time is had by all, I begin to see there is a real thing between the two groups though no one likes to mention it out loud.

Class Debates I do not mind, I been used to arguing with Dad all my life, what gets me is Essays. We do one each week to sum up, and all my sums come wrong.

Reason for this is we get about fifteen books to read every week and are not allowed more than three hours a day with a reading machine, this is plenty for most people but I only get through a quarter of the stuff.

If you only know a quarter of the relevant facts you get things cockeyed and I can find no way around this.

My first essay comes back marked Some original ideas but more reference to actual examples needed, style wants polishing up.

The second has Original!! but what about the FACTS style needs toning down.

More of the same.

After three weeks I am about ready to declare; then I find out B gets assorted beefs written on her essays too and takes it for granted everybody does, she says Teachers always tell you what you do wrong not what you do right, this is Education.

I stick it some more.

I will say it is interesting all right. We are studying Influences on Cultural Trends, of which there are plenty some obvious some not.

Most of the class are looking forward to becoming Influences themselves, we have not been taught how to do this yet but everyone figures that comes next. It

seems to me though that whatever you call it it comes down to pushing people around when they are not looking, and this is something I do not approve of more than halfway.

There is just one person in the class besides me does not seem to feel certain all is for the best. This is the dark fellow I noticed on Opening day, six foot six built like a pencil. His name is Likofo Komom'baraze and he is a genuine African; they are rare at Russett because Africans look down on Applied studies, preferring everything Pure. Most of them study Mathematics and Literature and so on at their own universities or the Sorbonne or somewhere, seems he is the first ever to take Cultural Engineering and not so sure he likes it.

There is a bond between us and we become friendly in a kind of way, I find he is not so unhappy as he looks but Africans are proverbially melancholy according to B.

I say to Komo one time that I am worried about the exams, he looks astonished and says But, Lizzie, you

are so clever! turns out he thinks this because the things I say in class debates do not some out of any book he knows of, but it is encouraging just the same.

I need the encouragement.

Seventh week of term the Director of Studies is M’Clare.

Maybe it makes not so much difference, but that week I do everything wrong. To start with I manage to put in twice the legitimate time reading for several days, I get through seven books and addle myself thoroughly. In Debates I cannot so much as open my mouth, I am thinking about that Essay all the time, I sit up nights writing it and then tear the stuff up. In the end I guess I just join up bits that I remember out of books and pass that in.

B thinks my behavior odd, but she has caught on now I do not regard M’Clare as the most wonderful thing that ever happened.

The last debate of the week comes after essays have been handed in, I try to pay attention but I am too tired. I notice Komo is trying to say something and stuttering quite a bit, but I do not take in what it is about.

Next day I run into Komo after breakfast and he says Lizzie why were you so silent all the week?

What we studied this time was various pieces of Terrie history where someone deliberately set out to shape things according to his own ideas, I begin to see why Komo is somewhat peeved with me.

Komo says, “Everybody concentrated on the practicability of the *modus operandi* employed, without considering the ethical aspects of the matter. I think it is at least debatable whether any individual has the right to try and determine the course of evolution of a society, most of the members of which are ignorant of his intentions. I hoped that the discussion would clear my mind, but nobody mentioned this side of it except me.”

I know why Komo is worried about this, his old man is a Tartar by all accounts has the idea he wants to re-establish a tribal society in Africa like they had five hundred years ago; this is why he send Komo to study at Russett and Komo is only half sold on the idea.

I say “Listen Komo, this is only the first term and as far as I can see M’Clare is only warming up, we have not got to the real stuff at all yet. I think we shall be able to judge it better when we know more about it, also maybe some of the stuff later in the course might be real helpful if you have to argue with your Dad.”

Komo slowly brightens and says “Yes, you are a wise girl, Lizzie Lee.”

Here we meet B and some others and conversation broadens, a minute later someone comes along with a little ticket saying Miss Lee see Professor M’Clane at 11.30 hours please.

Wise girl, huh?

Komo is still brooding on Ethics and the conversation has got on to Free Will, I listen a bit and then say, “Listen folks, where did you hatch? you do what you can and what you can’t you don’t, what is not set by your genes is limited by your environment let alone we were not the first to think of pushing people around, where does the freedom come in?”

They gape and B says Oh but Lizzie, don’t you remember what M’Clare said on Opening Day?

This remark I am tired of, it seems M’Clare put the whole course into that one hour or so Why we go on studying I do not know.

I say No I did not listen and I am tired of hearing that sentence, did nobody write the lecture down?

B gasps and says there is a recording in the library.

It was quite a speech, I will say.

There is quite a bit about free will. M’Clare says Anyone who feels they have a right to fiddle with

other people’s lives has no business at Russett. But there is no such thing as absolute freedom, it is a contradiction in terms. Even when you do what you want, your wants are determined by your mental make up and previous experience. If you do nothing and want nothing, that is not freedom of will, but freedom from will, no will.

But, he says, all the time we are making choices, some known and some not: the more you look the more you see this. Quote, “It has probably not occurred to you that there is an alternative to sitting here until the hour strikes, and yet the forces that prevent you from walking out are probably not insurmountable. I say ‘Probably’ because a cultural inhibition can be as absolute as a physical impossibility. Whatever we do means submitting to one set of forces and resisting others. Those of you who are listening are obeying the forces of courtesy, interest or the hope that I may say something useful in examinations, and resisting the forces that draw your minds on to other things. Some of you may have made the opposite choice. The more we consider our

doings the more choices we see, and the more we see the better hope we have of understanding human affairs.”

Here are examples how people often do not make the choice they would really prefer, they are got at for being sissy or something. Or social institutions get in the way even when everyone knows what should be done, Hard cases make bad law and Bad law makes hard cases too. M’Clare says also You are always free to resist your environment, but to do so limits all your choices afterwards, this comes to Make environments so they do not have to be resisted.

There is lots more but this bit has something to do with me, though you may not think so yet.

If I have any choices now, well I can throw my hand in or try to work something out; all I can think of is telling M’Clare how I cannot use a reading machine.

I m not so sure that is a choice, when he said Inhibitions can be absolute, Brother no fooling that is perfectly true.

Right now I can choose to sit here and do nothing or go and get some work done, there is a Balance of forces over that but then I go along to a Reading Room.

I have a long list of books I ought to have read, I just take the first, dial for it and fit it in the machine.

I think, now I can choose to concentrate or I can let my mind go off on this mess I got into it and What Dad is going to say, no one in their senses would choose that last one. I set my chronoscope for twenty past eleven and put the blinkers on.

I switch the machine on, it lights and starts to go.

Then it goes crazy.

What should have warned me, there is no click. There is the usual warm up, slow then faster, but instead of a little jump and then ordinary speed it gets faster and faster and before I realize it I am caught.

It is like being stuck in concrete except this is inside of me, inside my head, and growing, it spreads and pushes, it is too big for my skill it is going to *burst*

and then I have let out a most almighty yell and torn out of the thing, I find later I left a bit of hair in the blinkers but I am out of it.

There is no one around, I run as though that machine had legs to come after me, I run right out in the campus and nearly crash with a tree, then I put my back to it and start breathing again.

Whatever I have done until now, judging by the feel of my rbs breathing was no part of it.

After a bit I sit down, I still have my back to the tree, I leave thinking till later and just sit.

Then I jump up and yell again.

I have left that crazy machine to itself, someone may sit in it this minute and get driven clean out of their head.

I run back not quite so fast as I came and burst in, someone just sitting down I yell out loud and yank him out of it.

It is a Third Year I do not know, from another class, he is much astonished by me.

I explain.

I guess I make it dramatic, he looks quite scared, meanwhile a small crowd has gathered around the door.

Along comes Doc Beschrievene expert at this kind of machine to see Why breach of the rule of silence in this block.

He trots straight in and starts inspecting the chair, then he says Exactly what happened, Miss Lee?

I say My God I have to see Mr. M’Clare!

I have been scratching my wrist for minutes, I now find the alarm of my chronoscope is trying to make

itself felt, once again I am breaking records away from there.

I arrive one minute later but M’Clare has a visitor already so I can even get my breath, I also catch up on my apprehensions about this interview; seem to me the choice is get slung out as a slacker or get slung out as moron and I truly do not know which one I care for less.

Then the visitor goes and I stumble in.

M’Clare has a kind of unusual look, his eyes have gone flat and a little way back behind the lids, I do not get it at first then I suddenly see he is very tired.

However his voice is just as usual, not angry but maybe a little tired too, he says, “Well, Miss Lee, they say actions speak louder than words, and you certainly have given us a demonstration; you’ve made it quite clear that you couldd o the work but you aren’t going to, and while it would be interesting to see if you could gauge the requirements of the examiners so exactly this time I don’t think it would

justify the time taken to mark your papers. What do you want to do? Go back to Excenus straight away or take a vacation first?”

I simply do not have anything to say, I feel I have been wrapped and sealed and stuck in the deliver hatch, he goes on, “It’s a pity, I think. I thought when I first saw you there was a brain under that golden mop and it was a pity to let it go to waste. If only there were something that mattered more to you than the idea of being made to do what you don’t want to—”

It is queer to watch someone get a call on a built-in phone, some do a sort of twitch some shut their eyes, M’Clare just lets the focus of his side out through the wall and I might not be there any more, I wish I was not but I have to say something before I go away.

M’Clare has been using a throat mike but now he says out loud, “Yes, come over right away.”

Now he is not tired any more.

He says “What happened to the reading machine, Miss Lee?”

I say “It went crazy.” Then I see this is kid’s talk, but I have no time to put learned words into it, I say “Look. You know how it starts? There is a sort of warm up and then a little click and it settles down to the right speed? Well it did not happen. What I think, the governor must have been off or something, but that is not all—it got quicker and quicker but it did something else—look I have not the right expression for it, but it felt like something opened my skull and pasting things on the convolutions inside.”

He has a look of wild something, maybe surprise maybe just exasperation, then Doc Beschrievene comes in.

He says “Miss Lee, if it was a joke, may we call it off? Readers are in short supply.”

I say if I wanted to make a joke I would make it a funny one.

M’Clare says, “Ask Miss Lee to tell you what happens when you start the reader.

Beschrievene says, “I have started it! I connected it up and it worked quite normally.”

Now the thing has gone into hiding, it will jump out on someone else like it did on me, I have no time to say this; M’Clare says “Tell Dr. Beschrievene about the reader.”

I say “It started to go too fast and then—”

He says Start at the beginning and tell what I told before.

I say “When you sit in a reader there is normally an initial period during which the movement of the words becomes more rapid, then there is a short transitional period of confusion and then the thing clicks audibly and the movement of the words proceeds at a set rate, this time—”

Here Doc gives a yell just like me and jumps to his feet.

M’Clare says What was I reading in the machine?

I do not see what that has to do with it but I tell him, then he wants to know what I remember of it and where it stopped.

I would not have thought I remembered but I do, I know just where it had go to, he takes me backwards bit by bit—

Then I begin to catch on.

M’Clare says “What is your usual reading rate, Liz?”

I swallow hard, I say “Too low to show on the dial, I don’t know.”

He says “Is your father handicapped too?”

I lift my head again, I am going to say that is not his business, then I say Yes instead.

He says “And he feels badly about it? Yes, he would. And you never told anybody. Of course not!” I do not know if it is scorn or anger or what. Beschrievene is talking to him in a language I do not know, M’Clare says Come along to the reading room.

The chair has its back off, M’Clare plugs in a little meter lying on the floor and says “Sit down, Liz.”

There is nothing I want less than to sit in that chair, but I do.

M’Clare says, “Whether or not you have a repetition of your previous experience is entirely up to you. Switch it on.”

I am annoyed at his tone, I think I will give that switch a good bang, I feel I have done it too.

But the light does not go on.

M’Clare says patiently, “Turn on, please, Miss Lee.”

I say “You do it.”

Beschrievene says, “Wait! There is no need to demonstrate, after all. We know what happened.”

Then M’Clare’s fingers brush over mine and turn the switch.

I jump all over, the thing warms up and then click! there is the little jump and the words move steadily through.

And you know, I am disappointed.

Beschrievene says He will be the son of a bigamist, I jump out of the chair and demand to know what goes?

M’Clare is looking at a dial in the meter, he turns and looks at me with exactly the same expression and says, “Would you like to repeat your previous experience?”

Beschrievene says, “No!”

I say, “Yes. I would.”

M’Clare bends and does something inside the machine, then he says again, “Sit down, Lizzie Lee.”

I do. I hit the switch myself too.

There it is again, words slide across slow and then quicker and quicker and there is something pressing on my brain, then there is a bang and it all goes off and Beschrievene is talking angry and foreign to M’Clare.

I climb out and say Will they kindly explain.

M’Clare tells me to come and look, it is the reading-rate dial of the machine it now says Seven thousand five hundred and three.

Beschrievene says How much do I know about the machine? seems to me the safest answer is Nothing at all.

He says, “There is an attachment which regulates the speed of movement of the words according to the reaction of the user. It sets itself automatically and

registers on this dial here. But there is also another part of the machine far more important although there is no dial for it, unless you fit a test-meter as we have done: this is called the concentration unit or Crammer."

I did know that, it is what makes people able to read faster than with an old-style book.

He says, "This unit is compulsive. When the machines were first made it was thought that they might be misused to insert hypnotic commands into the minds of readers. It would be very difficult, but perhaps possible. Therefore in the design was incorporated a safety device." He pats one individual piece of spaghetti for me to admire.

He says, "This device automatically shuts off the machine when it encounters certain cortical wave-patterns which correspond to strong resistance, such as is called forth by hypnotically imposed orders; not merely the resistance of a wandering mind."

I say But—

He looks as though I suddenly started sprouting and says “M’Clare this is most strange, this very young girl to be so strong, and from childhood too! Looks are nothing, of course—”

M’Clare says “Exactly so. Do you understand, Miss Lee? One of your outstanding characteristics is a dislike of being what you call pushed around, in fact I believe if somebody tried to force you to carry out your dearest wish you would resist with all your might, you are not so set on free will as you are free won’t. The Crammer appeared to your subconscious as something that interfered with your personal freedom, so you resisted it. That isn’t uncommon, at first, but not so many people resist hard enough to turn the thing off.”

I say “But it worked!”

Beschrievene says that the safety device only turns off the Crammer, the rest of the machine goes on working but only at the rate for unassisted reading about one tenth normal rate.

M’Clare says, “You, my girl, have been trying to keep up with a course designed for people who could absorb information seven or eight times as fast. No wonder your knowledge seemed a bit sketchy.”

He sounds angry.

Well hells bells I am angry myself, if only I had told somebody it could all have been put right at the start, or if only the man who first tried to teach Dad the reader had known what was wrong with the way he used it, Dad would have had ordinary schooling and maybe not gone into prospecting but something else, and—

Then whoever got born it would not have been me, so where does that get you?

Beschrievene is saying, “What I do not understand, why did she suddenly stop resisting the machine?”

M’Clare says Well Liz?

It is a little time before I see the answer to that, then I say “We cannot resist everything we can only choose the forces to which we will submit.”

They look blank, M’Clare says Is it a quotation?

I say “Your speech on Opening Day, I did not listen. I heard it just now.”

This I never thought to see, his classical puss goes red all over and he does not know what to say.

Beschrievene wants to know more of what was said so I recite, at the end he says “Words! Your students frighten me, M’Clare. So much power in words, at the right time, and you are training them to use such tools so young! To use them perhaps on a whole planet!”

M’Clare says “Would you rather leave it to chance? Or to people with good intentions and no training at all? Or to professional ax-grinders and amateurs on the make?”

I say How do I stop doing it?

Beschrievene rubs his chin and says I will have to start slowly, the machine produced so much effect because it was going fast, normally children learn to read at five when their reading rate is low even with the Crammer. He says he will take out the safety but put in something to limit speed and I can have a short session tomorrow.

I say Exams in four weeks three days why not today?

He laughs and says Of course I will be excused the exam—

M’Clare says Certainly I will take the exam, there is no reason why I should not pull up to pass standard; work is not heavy this term.

Beschrievene looks under his eyebrows but says Very Well,

After lunch I sit down in the doctored machine.

Five minutes later I am sick.

Beschrievene fusses and gives me anti-nauseant and makes me lie down one half hour and then I start again.

I last twenty minutes and come out head aching fit to grind a hole, I say For all sakes run it full speed it is this push and drag together turns me up, this morning it only scared me.

He does not want to do this, I try all out to persuade him, I am getting set to weep tears when he says Very well, he is no longer surprised my will was strong enough to turn off the machine.

This time it comes full on.

The words slide across my eyes slow, then quicker, then suddenly they are running like water pouring through my eyes to my brain, something has hold of me keeping my mind open so that they can get in, if I struggle if I stop one microsecond from absolute concentration they will jam and something will *break*.

I could not pull any of my mind away to think with but there is a little corner of it free, watching my body, it makes my breath go on, digs my nails in my hand, stops the muscles of my legs when they try to jerk me out of the chair, sets others to push me back again.

I can hear my breath panting and the bang of my heart, then I do not hear it any longer, I am not separate any longer from the knowledge coming into me from the machine.

and then it stops.

It is like waking with a light on the face, I gasp and leap in the seat and the blinkers pull my hair, I yell What did you do that for?

M’Clare is standing in front of me, he says Eighty-seven minutes is quite sufficient come out of that at once.

I try to stand and my knees won’t unhinge, to hear M’Clare you would think it was his legs I got cramp

in, I suppose I went to sleep in the middle of his remarks anyway I wake tomorrow in bed.

In the morning I tell it all to B because she is a friend of mine and it is instructive anyway.

B says Lizzie it must have been awful but it is rather wonderful too; I do not see it this way I say Well it is nice it is over.

Which it is not.

Four weeks took a long time from the front end but not when it is over and I have to take the exam.

I have made up my mind on one thing, if I do not pass I am not asking anyone to make allowances I am just straight off going home, I am too tired to think much about it but that is what I will do.

Exam, I look at all the busy interested faces and the stylers clicking along and at the end I am certain for sure I failed it by quite a way.

I do not join any post-morten groups I get to my room and lock the door and think for a bit.

I think That finishes it, no more strain and grind and Terrie voices and Please Tune In Daily For Routine Announcements and smells you get in some of this air, no more high-minded kids who don’t know dead sure from however, no more essays and No More M’Clare, I wish they would hurry up and get the marks over so I can get organized to count my blessings properly.

However sixty four-hour papers take time to read even with a Crammer and M’Clare dose them all himself, we shall get the marks day after tomorrow if then.

There is a buzz from the speaker in the study and B is not there, I have to go.

Of all people who should be too busy to call me just now it is Mr. M’Clare.

He says I have not notified him of my vacation plans yet.

I say Huh?

He says as my guardian he ought to know where I am to be found and he wants to be sure I have got return schedules fixed from wherever I am going to as to make certain I get back in time for next term.

I say Hell what makes you think I am coming back next term anyway.

He says Certainly I am coming back next term, if I am referring to the exam he has just had a look at my paper it is adequate though not outstanding no doubt I will do better with time. Will I let his secretary have details of my plans, and he turns it off on me.

I sit down on the floor, no chair to hand.

Well for one thing the bit about the vacations was not even meant to deceive, he did it just to let me know I was Through.

So I have not finished here after all.

The more I think about studying Cultural Engineering the more doubtful I get, it is pushing people around however you like to put it more fancy than that.

The more I think about Terries the more I wonder how they survived so long, some are all right such as B but evne she would not be so safe in most places I know.

The more I think—

Well who am I fooling after all?

The plain fact is I am not leaving Russett and all the rest of it and I am so pleased with this, just now I do not care if the whole College calls me Lysistrata.

The end.